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**The Voluntary Principles on Security & Human Rights
Plenary adopts Formal Participation Criteria**

(May 9, 2007) Washington, DC -- The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) Plenary adopted formal participation criteria this week at its May 7-8, 2007 Plenary, hosted by the U.S. Department of State. The criteria are intended to strengthen the VPs by fostering greater accountability on the part of all VPs participants including governments, companies and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs).

The criteria articulate the responsibilities of current and future VPs members and should strengthen implementation of the VPs while also encouraging more robust and constructive dialogue among participants. Some of the key features of the new criteria include: minimum requirements for participation; a dispute resolution process to raise concerns about the performance of a participant; clear accountability mechanisms; and more transparent procedures for accepting new members. Additionally, the new criteria enshrine a commitment by participants to report publicly on their implementation of the VPs or their support for implementation once formal reporting criteria are finalized.

U.S. Department of State Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Barry F. Lowenkron, opened the Plenary and congratulated VPs participants noting that, "the adoption of clear performance-based criteria governing participation in the Voluntary Principles reinforces our shared commitment to ensuring that the security practices of the extractive industry contribute to the protection of human rights."

The participation criteria adoption, combined with last year's decisions to remove the requirement that companies or NGOs could participate in the Plenary only if their home government was also a participant, and to open the process to host governments that play an active role in in-country implementation processes, pave the way towards an expansion of the Voluntary Principles membership.

The new procedure for admission to the Plenary requires the submission of a formal expression of interest, and the consensus support of current participants. Once admitted, participants seek to strengthen the effective implementation of the principles by sharing examples of good practices and other learning experiences, and by promoting their wider use. If an applicant



is not admitted, they will receive an explanation for that decision and will have an opportunity to reply.

The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights are a unique tripartite, multi-stakeholder initiative established in 2000 that introduced a set of principles to guide extractives companies in maintaining the safety and security of their operations within an operating framework that ensures respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Voluntary Principles address three main areas: risk assessment; interactions between companies and public security; and interactions between companies and private security.

Visit www.voluntaryprinciples.org or the websites of the participants:

Governments:

Netherlands (www.minez.nl or www.mvonderland.nl)

Norway (<http://odin.dep.no/ud/engelsk/>)

The United States of America (www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/2931.htm)

The United Kingdom (www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk/voluntary.shtml)

Corporations:

Anglo American (www.angloamerican.co.uk)

BG Group (www.bg-group.com)

BHP Billiton (www.bhpbilliton.com)

BP (www.bp.com)

Chevron (www.chevron.com)

ConocoPhillips (www.conocophillips.com)

ExxonMobil (www.exxonmobil.com)

Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold (www.fcx.com)

Hess Corporation (www.hess.com)

Marathon Oil (www.marathon.com)

Newmont Mining Corporation (www.newmont.com)

Norsk Hydro (www.hydro.com)

Occidental Petroleum Corporation (www.oxy.com)

Rio Tinto (www.riotinto.com)

Shell (www.shell.com)

Statoil (www.statoil.com)

Non-Governmental Organizations:

Amnesty International (<http://amnesty.org>)

The Fund for Peace (www.fundforpeace.org)

Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org)

Human Rights First (www.humanrightsfirst.org)

International Alert (www.international-alert.org)

Pax Christi Netherlands (www.paxchristi.nl)

Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk)



Observers:

International Committee of the Red Cross (www.icrc.org)

International Council on Mining & Metals (www.icmm.com)

International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association
(www.iecea.org)